

James Charnley House  
1365 North Astor Street,  
southeast corner of Astor and  
Schiller Streets  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Chicago

HABS No. ILL-1009

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
12-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ILL-1009

JAMES CHARNLEY HOUSE

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
12-

Address: 1365 North Astor Street, southeast corner of Astor and Schiller Streets, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner and Occupant: Mrs. James B. Waller, 1365 North Astor Street, Chicago, Illinois.

Present Use: Dwelling.

Statement of Significance: The Charnley House, probably designed by Frank Lloyd Wright during the time he worked for Adler and Sullivan, was recognized in February 1960 by the Commission on Chicago Architectural Landmark.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners (chain of title):  
Legal description of the property: Part of Lot 35 in John Jacob Astor's Addition to Chicago being a Sub-division of part of the N.W. fractional 1/4 of Section 3-39-14.

The following was taken from: Drury, John, Old Chicago Houses (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941), pp. 484-488; and Book 422, pp. 37-39, Cook County Recorder's Office.

The house was designed for James Charnley, a Chicago lumberman (Drury, 1941, p. 484). James and Helen Charnley had purchased the property from Louise S. Long and husband on February 12, 1890 (Document 1221142). Redmond Stephens, an attorney (Drury, 1941, p. 487) purchased the house on November 3, 1911. (Document 4861077). Stephens sold the house to James B. Waller, a real estate man, on August 8, 1918 (Document 6372577). James B. Waller III, his son, owned the house to 1941 (Drury, 1941 pp. 487). It is presently owned by Nettie J. Waller et al. as of the last entry dated January 2, 1958 (Document 17100676).

2. Date of erection: 1892.
3. Architect: Adler and Sullivan's office; general form and exterior detailing is thought to be the work of Frank Lloyd Wright (Morrison, 1935, p. 133). Perhaps some work is by George Grant Elmslie, also of Adler

and Sullivan (Gebhard, Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, May, 1960, p. 63).

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The original house contained two rooms per floor separated by the central stair hall. The house has a basement, two stories, and an attic. It is built primarily of yellow Roman brick. The base, doorway, and flanking windows are of limestone ashlar. The balcony, with Wright's geometric adaptation of Sullivan ornament, is of stained wood, while the cornices are of light green copper. (Morrison, 1935, p. 132).
5. Notes on alterations and additions: A ten foot addition was made to the south end of the house. The structure was superimposed over what was originally a garden wall extending from the basement stonework (date unknown).

B. Bibliography:

Bush-Brown, Albert, Louis Sullivan (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1960), p. 21, Pl. 40.

Chicago Sun Times, April 13, 1959, photograph.  
Clippings in the Library of the Chicago Historical Society.

Drury, John, Old Chicago Houses (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941), pp. 484-488, photograph p. 485.

Farr, Finis, Frank Lloyd Wright (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), pp. 49-50, 53-65, 70, pl. 2.

Gebhard, D., "Louis Sullivan and George Grant Elmslie," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Vol. XIX (May, 1960), p. 63.

Gutheim, Frederick, ed. Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941), pp. 177, 187.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell, In the Nature of Materials (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1948), pp. 7, 11, 12, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, 30, 102. Photograph p. 9.

Manson, Grant Carpenter, Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910 (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1958), pp. 12, 26-28, 30, 38, 44, 48, 59, 61, 62, 68, 75, 80, 126, photographs pp. 26, 28, plan p. 26. Good description.

Morrison, Hugh, Louis Sullivan (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1935), pp. 132-133, 302, pl. 42. Good description.

"Residence of James Charnley, Esq., Chicago, Adler and Sullivan, Architects," Architectural Record, Vol. 1 (January-March, 1892), p. 348, perspective drawing.

"Residence for Mr. James Charnley, Chicago, Ill., Adler and Sullivan, Architects," Inland Architect, Vol. 18 (August, 1891), p. 14, Plates.

Scully, Vincent, Jr., Frank Lloyd Wright (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1960), pp. 15, 25, 30, pl. 10

Western Architect, Vol. 34, No. 1 (January, 1925), photograph Pl. 5.

Wright, Frank Lloyd, An Autobiography (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1932), p. 106.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest: The house is an early work of Frank Lloyd Wright, designed while he was employed by the firm of Adler and Sullivan.
2. Condition of fabric: The house is in generally good condition inside and out. There is some decay of the wood of the balcony. All exterior wooden trim is in need of painting.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: Three.
2. Over-all dimensions: Approximately 26' (north) by 76' (west, front), including the addition on the south side.
3. Layout--shape: Almost rectangular--south wall of addition angles out at approximately 95° to follow south lot line.
4. Foundations: Rough stone; plastered over in the basement. A small (4") limestone water table is at the base of all four exterior walls.
5. Wall construction, finish and color: The lower seven feet of the north and west walls are smooth-faced random ashlar limestone. This stone extends up around the front door and flanking windows. There is also a limestone belt course between the second and third floors, and beneath the cornice. The rest of the north and west walls are

yellow Roman brick with matching mortar. The balcony is constructed of wood which is painted brown. The south and east walls are common brick.

6. Stoops: There are three limestone steps with flanking cheeks at the front door.
7. Chimneys: One central chimney on the rear east wall and one each from the north and south fireplaces.
8. Openings:
  - a. Doorways: Central front door on west side; small unused door to pantry and basement on east side; side door to kitchen (addition) on south side. The main door on the west side unusually wide, painted black with an iron grill of typical Sullivan ornament.
  - b. Windows: Basement: There are three groups of basement windows each of four square windows--one group on the north and two groups on the west. These are set deeply into the limestone base and are covered with metal grills. There are two similar, narrow slit windows on either side of the main door. A stock basement window is on the west in the south addition. The first floor windows flanking the door are the casement type, with leading in a circular pattern. Elsewhere on the upper floors, double-hung windows. The balcony also has casement windows. All windows except those of the balcony have limestone sills.
9. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Flat roof, built-up roofing, sloped downward about six inches to meet the cornice.
  - b. Cornice: A copper cornice projects on the north and west, decorated on both the face and soffitt. A similar cornice caps the balcony.
  - c. Balcony: The west balcony projects about one foot on seven cantilivered wooden beams. The entire structure is richly decorated in typical Sullivan ornament.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Basement--The original kitchen was located in the south end of the basement and was connected with

the first floor butler's pantry by a dumb-waiter. The large warming stove remains. The north end is the laundry room. The floors are wooden and the walls plastered. First floor: The first floor is entered from a street-level entry which is five steps lower than the first-floor level. The entry leads to a large foyer which has a small sitting area on either side. Entrance to all areas from the foyer is made through large arches, to sitting rooms on the west, living room on the north, dining room on the south, and to the stairway on the east. An arched guest closet on the east wall repeats the arch of the stairwell entrance. Off the dining room is a small butler's pantry. The south addition contains a large new kitchen on the east and a small screened-in porch on the west.

Second and third floors: The upper floors are similar in plan to the first floor. The large central stair well and hall connects the four bedrooms, two on each floor, one north and one south. Each has a private bath, large closets and a fireplace. The second floor balcony may be entered through double doors from the central stair well or from the master bedroom to the south. The south addition provides another large room and terrace off the master bedroom on the second floor, and servants' quarters on the third floor.

2. Stairways: The house is built around the large central stairway which extends from the first to the third floors. The wooden stairs are unusually low and wide. The second floor railing around the stair well is decorated in typical Sullivan ornament. A screen of closely spaced wooden uprights rises from the east side of second-floor stair well to connect with the third floor stair well railing of the same material and design. The stair well is lighted by a large skylight. There is a circular servants' stairway from the basement to the third floor in the rear (east side) of the house, also lighted by a skylight.
3. Flooring: Mostly wood. The bathrooms have white hexagonal tile floors. A two-foot wide strip of mosaic floor is located in the foyer at the east wall between the stairway and the guest closet.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior walls and ceilings are plaster with a point or wallpaper finish.
5. Doors: The doorways on the first floor are low arches. Interior doors are all approximately 7' high, single-panel, beaded trim. The decoration on the outside front door and inside entry door are especially noteworthy.

6. Decorative features and trim: The house has especially fine wooden molding with beaded trim throughout. The living room and dining room fireplaces are marble with mantels ornamented in typical Sullivan designs. The large bookcases in the living room also have beaded glass doors in a typical Sullivan design.
7. Heating: The fireplaces on all floors are no longer in use. The house has central gas heating with radiators and cold-air ducts in the floor.

D. Site

1. Orientation and general setting: The house faces west on Astor Street. It is one block from Lake Michigan to the east, in the fashionable Gold Coast section of Chicago. There are many old town houses around it as well as several new high-rise apartment buildings. The present owner has stated that the property has been sought after as a site for another high-rise building, but she does not intend to sell it.
2. Landscaping, walks, enclosures: The house is at the sidewalk line on the north and west. There is a small grass strip outside the sidewalk with two trees on the west. The fenced-in backyard is not landscaped.

Prepared by Larry Homolka, Historian  
National Park Service  
August 1963.

ADDENDUM TO:  
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*ILL, 16-CHIG, 12-*

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
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Washington, DC 20240-0001